
The Hourglass

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QUANDALE DINGLE REVIEW: LOOKING AT RENZO DEGUZMAN'S SMASH-HIT

Quandale Dingle is the gripping first play of Filipino playwright Renzo Deguzman, set right here in Ireland! The tragedy is set in the fictitious Quandale Dingle Manor, from whence it derives its title. In the show, the extended family of Sean Dongle has gathered in his Manor for his funeral, which turns into a slaughter after the rightful heir to the Manor gets murdered while they're locked inside due to a terrible storm. The

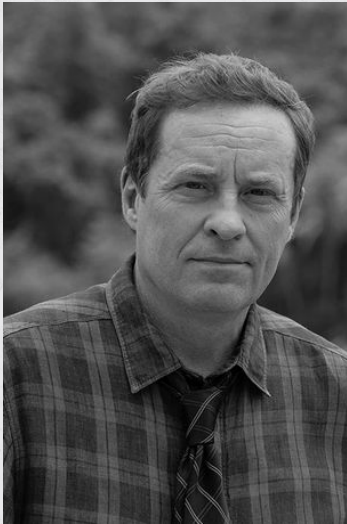
discovery of the body in the ballroom sets off the explosive tragedy. The protagonist, Quentin Dongle, grandson of Sean, tries to figure out who murdered Sean's son, Patrick Dongle, as his extended family are getting murdered one by one around him.

It is truly rare for plays to pack such a powerful punch these days, yet Quandale Dingle has

a climax to rival Hamlet. The writer uses his skillful prose to delicately craft a thrilling tale which will have you hooked till the very end, and will likely make you shed a few tears, both of joy and of anguish. This play really casts a shadow of light onto the industry, as it revolutionised the tired and worn-out "murder mystery" style of stories, introducing a renaissance to the entire genre,



Craggy House, the inspiration for Quandale Dingle Manor



showing that with enough imagination and talent, an author can reinvent an overused and stale subject. Deguzman is praised for having completely ignored all the tropes used time and time again in older works, and for having introduced new never-before seen ideas to the community, breaking new ground and unleashing a new wave of creativity, revitalising Irish theatrical society.

Despite having so many cutting-edge concepts in his play, Deguzman still wanted to reject modernism and decided to stick with the genre of traditional tragedy.

The cast, like the dramatist, are mostly new to theatre, yet deliver a stunning performance. The fledgeling actors truly do justice to the melancholy script, and put many of

their contemporaries to shame. Despite an all-round Oscar-worthy cast, one actor in particular really steals the limelight. Of course I'm referring to Dougal McGuire, an already accomplished actor, whose performance outshined the already blazing cast. With his avant-garde and creative depiction of Eoin Edward Sean, one of the main antagonists, he masterfully navigates the uncharted territory of stage-acting that had so far been left untouched by even the bravest of actors. The Eoin played by McGuire is a slimy and aggressive sleeveen, but who

passes off as a kind and intelligent person until the very end.

Of course no play review can go without discussing the *mise-en-scène*: the stage effects were both gory and brutally realistic. Blood and entrails spill everywhere during the sanguinary show, with the atmosphere in the audience impregnated with an aghast horror. The deviceful and inventive sound design had everyone's spines shivering to the last moment. They used plenty of innovative and ingenious contraptions to produce



the terrific effects, a real masterclass in number 8 wire mentality. Rumour has it that this was not intentional, and only came about due the show's financing being banjaxed for the final months of preparation, forcing everyone to get inventive to save costs.

However, a piece of this calibre does not come without criticism. Dermot Morgan's breakout role as Quentin Dongle was appreciated by the general public, but seasoned critics felt there was still something to be desired from his performance. On a surface level, Morgan managed to captivate audiences with his charismatic and outgoing personality, but the subtleties usually observed



Dermot Morgan, the actor who portrayed fun-loving Quentin

in experienced actors were missing at times. The main criticism of Morgan's performance was his perhaps too intricate interpretation of the admittedly multifaceted character. This complicated an already very sophisticated plot, and had a tendency to confuse the audience. Some spectators were overheard saying that although they didn't regret the casting of Morgan as Quentin

Dongle, they still felt that Dermot Morgan didn't give enough justice to the character that was envisioned by the playwright. This is, however, due to the depth and complexity of the demanding script, that even some of the world's best actors would have struggled with.

The only other slight issue of note with this truly superlative play, was the only slightly ineffective

lighting. Due to the tech crew's steadfast commitment to creating an immersive and realistic experience, they went a bit overboard with the lightning effects at times. This, in a few instances, hindered the audience's ability to see what was happening. Aside from this minor inconvenience the lighting crew did a fantastic job, and splendidly created the undercurrents that made the show what it is.

This play offers a truly novel depiction of Irish rural life, with Deguzman being considered by some to be the next Synge. The warmth and honesty with which Deguzman manages to paint a picture of rural life in Ireland is astounding, especially since he has never actually been to Ireland. This only adds to his literary consequence and prestige.



Needless to say, this is a production of dense intelligence, but one that perhaps overreaches itself by trying to illuminate each component part. Its ability to do so comes from Deguzman's brilliance with the text. He spins it out with such clarity that each speech seems utterly clear and fresh. The problem is that such transparency opens up the play's multiplicities and

Dermot Morgan gives us too many Quentin Dongles all at once.

Quandale Dingle will be showing until September 31st.

- Review written by guest contributors: Ross Ernst and Max Macrae



In a hilarious show of nominative determinism, American immigrant John Storm died in a storm last week. Local Shannon O'Leary added: "L Bozo, good riddance." Storm was not the only casualty of last week's storm: several sheep have been reported missing by local farmers. Storm was

found in a field last night, after days of locals "not being bothered" to form a search party. "He was a pretentious Lúdramán, nobody liked him." He kept pretending to be Irish "cause his great-grandma's dog was from Cornwall, apparently." His family in America declined to comment.